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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: DISAPPOINTED CANDIDATE  
HRYTSENKO REFLECTS

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

#### Summary

1. (C) Poorly performing Presidential candidate and head of the Rada National Security and Defense Committee, Anatoliy Hrytsenko, told the Ambassador January 22 that he did not see much of a difference between PM Tymoshenko and opposition leader Yanukovych, the two candidates for the February 7 runoff. Hrytsenko predicted neither would be able to unite the country. Meanwhile, he warned Russian interests will move in following the election to buy up strategic assets. Hrytsenko believes public disillusionment could lead to early presidential elections within 1-2 years. He was critical of U.S. policy toward Ukraine and recommended that the U.S. focus on tangible gestures of assistance that could earn goodwill, such as paying for disposal of remaining stocks of melange rocket fuel. End Summary.

#### Ukraine's Prospects

2. (C) Ambassador met with a disappointed Anatoliy Hrytsenko, Chair of the Rada Security and Defense Committee, January 22. Hrytsenko, a former Defense Minister under President Yushchenko, amassed only 1.2% of the vote in the first round of Presidential elections January 17. Hrytsenko observed that, despite the personality differences between Yanukovych and Tymoshenko, the long term consequences of either one would be about the same for Ukraine. He saw two possible paths for the country: split in two or consolidate. Reminding us that he has "worked with these people," Hrytsenko judged that neither candidate was capable of achieving consolidation.

3. (C) Presidential elections as early as 1-2 years from now are not out of the question, he said, once the people become disappointed with yet another round of no change and worsening economic prospects. Hrytsenko mused that it might be better if Yanukovych won, so that his inevitable failure as president could teach Eastern and Southern Ukraine an object lesson on the perils of clan-based voting.

#### Relations with Russia

4. (C) Asked where he sees Russian relations going under a new president, Hrytsenko said he believes Russia won't differentiate between Yanukovych or Tymoshenko; relations will be normal and pragmatic on the surface. However, behind the scenes, Russia will buy up strategic assets. It is through the economy, he continued, that Russia will influence election outcomes and the information space.

#### NATO

5. (C) Similarly, Hrytsenko did not foresee a major change in

Ukraine's formal relations with NATO. He predicted that Ukraine would likely continue to participate in such activities as peacekeeping operations. However, Hrytsenko does not believe Ukraine's efforts would be productive on the ground. He cited the example of the rapid reaction/disaster response mechanism, which, for want of an enabling phrase in the Ukrainian authorizing legislation, is unable to be convened.

¶6. (C) Serious military capabilities are a problem for Ukraine, he said. Neither Tymoshenko nor Yanukovych understand why Ukraine needs a modern army or why it should maintain skill levels even when the country is not a fighting or facing a war. Hrytsenko expressed doubt that, under either Tymoshenko or Yanukovych, the Rada would approve multilateral military exercises in 2010.

#### U.S. Relations -----

¶7. (C) Hrytsenko observed that there is anti-U.S. feeling in Ukraine, but said that it is "artificially planted." Nevertheless, he went on to say U.S. policy toward Ukraine is unclear, and argued that Ukraine needs real engagement on real issues. For example, the U.S. should pay for and finish the disposal of SS-24 fuel in Pavlograd; the U.S. could, with a few million dollars, pay for the disposal of the (16,000 metric tons of) melange rocket fuel stored around the country. This in particular would win the U.S. great public favor in Ukraine. He suggested the U.S. could impact corruption in Ukraine by helping isolate/attack the offshore assets of oligarchs and criminal figures. Finally, Hrytsenko

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said the U.S. should be working to help the Ukrainian defense industry, or it could fail and turn to old partners.

#### Hrytsenko's Plans -----

¶8. (C) According to Hrytsenko, early Parliamentary Elections could happen, but it would be a matter of financial expediency. It would depend on whether the parties involved determine whether it would be cheaper to buy votes in the current Rada for a new coalition, or cheaper to run another election.

¶9. (C) In the meantime, Hrytsenko plans to announce a new party that would participate in all upcoming elections: local, parliamentary, and presidential. The board members of his NGO, "Citizenship," include the heads of many micro-parties. He plans to consolidate these under the umbrella of the NGO as a political party, and assume the leadership.

#### Comment -----

¶10. (C) Hrytsenko appeared disappointed and disillusioned. Although his campaign had minimal funding and was low-key, he had likely expected more than the 1.2 percent he got on January 17. Tymoshenko's advisors had told us Hrytsenko was a contender for Defense Minister if she won, but Hrytsenko's refusal to endorse her for the second round -- combined with his poor result -- have not helped his chances, assuming he even wants the job. His grumblings about the U.S., despite his pro-Euro-Atlantic orientation, were notable. Hrytsenko may be overly pessimistic in his doubts regarding Rada approval for multilateral military exercises in 2010. Whether his new party will have any more traction than he had as a presidential candidate remains to be seen. His showing was well below the three percent needed for a party to enter parliament. In short, Hrytsenko's attempt to market himself as a pragmatic, uncorrupted, national interest-focused alternative to the existing leadership essentially failed to register.

